

The New Centaurs Gather 'em



Issue #30 - October 1996

Edited by Bob Stein

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Hiya!



Centaur of Attention

Welcome to New Centaurs Gatherum #30. Almost 3 months late, thanks to the inevitable crunch of 'real' work, natural disasters (3 hurricanes so far), and other problems which nobody is really interested in. #29 was well received, and a large number of artists and writers have responded to the call for more material. At 60 pages, this issue is the largest Gatherum ever put out, and I am really pleased with the quality of submissions.

First of all, I have to say a big Thank You to Cathey Henley Osborne and her terrific, prolific Texans! A large portion of the art in this issue arrived via one package which Cathey, Panda, Victory, Nick McRae, Shane A., Shira Aislinn Alexander, and Mike Garcia put together. As usual, Terrie Smith came up with some great new items as well.

You might also notice a sprinkling of satyrs and minotaurs among our normal centaur fare. Never fear, centaur-natics. Centaurs will always be the focus of NCG. However, a little variety always makes things more interesting.

There are some new features this month. First of all, I have added a **Yeas and Neighs** (page 59) section for reader comments. **Hoofprints** (page 41) lists books, TV shows, Internet sites, and other places where centaurs, minotaurs, or satyrs have been spotted. And lastly, **The Stable** (page 54), where you can find contact information for the artists and writers who contribute to Centaurs Gatherum. Issue #31 is planned for early 1997. Past experience makes me intentionally vague. However, I will need lots more art and stories, so please make submission before January 15th!

Happy Hoofbeats!

Bob Stein
Editor

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'Rewarded' - by Terrie Smith

Graius's Mare

By Loquacious O. Kentauros

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The sun was turning reddish gold, warm when the air was still, and there was light yet by which to see. The mountains stretched around, above, and beneath me. I paused, took breath, and decided that I had traveled long enough. My long kausia, Macedonian cloak, had kept my upper body warm when the winds blew, and there had been the exertion of the climb to generate a pleasant fatigue. I had enjoyed the bracing air, the strange plants, and the beautiful vistas. There was promise of still more of each to be found further up. Still, it would not do to risk the road at night. It was time to rest, and speed was not the object of my journey. Not at all. I smiled.

There was a clearing near one of the road's many turns as it looped its way up the mountainside, and it looked inviting. Methodically, I went through my father's requirements for a good place to camp. Here, the heights above me provided shelter. No rocks or partially fallen trees loomed overhead. The grasses and bushes were not unduly bent by the passage of animals or weather, and could provide comfort and food, in a pinch. Wind would not chill me in the night, or blow out my fire. For that, there was dead wood.

First things first! I removed my bags and checked myself out for bruises, injuries, and ticks. There had not been many stones along the road, and I had been careful, but I could feel my father looking over my shoulder as I looked myself over as best I could. All well. Stretching felt wonderful, and I paused to let the sun warm my muscles as I relaxed. Then I knelt down and searched through my things. Here was the iron tripod my mother had given me, and the small bronze cauldron I'd bought in Corinth. Here was dried meat--lamb, I think. There was time to make a cup of hot broth, and light to read by for a while longer. I set my cloak on two sticks as a shield against a chance breeze, and looked for twigs and tinder.

"Hail, stranger!" said a somewhat creaky voice.

I looked up. An elderly centaur stood before me. His hair and beard were white, combed, and generous. He wore a homespun tunic and a farmer's straw hat. Below the cloth, his hide was a light roan; his tail much the color of his beard. His lower body was well-muscled and filled out, and his pelt gleamed, well groomed and glossy, in the afternoon sun. I noted the staff in his hand, which he did not brandish or grip tightly. My own gastrophetes lay within easy reach. I did not think I would need it, and I left it lying as I rose and bowed in greeting.

"Hail, grandsire. I hope that I do not intrude where I am unwanted?"

His eyes widened a bit at my Rhodian accent, which, still, could not have sounded all that harshly upon his ears. After all, he, too, had spoken in Doric, the dialect of these parts. Perhaps it was my courteous response. Phocis had been much wilder fifty years before, during the troubles over Delphi and the rest, but Philip's army had brought order, after the devastation. Things, here and elsewhere, were getting better, and I had not felt any great risk in traveling alone. People had so far been welcoming and kind.

The smile showed strong white teeth and seemed genuine.

"No, no, you are most welcome. A good end to a good day, eh?"

"Indeed, sir. I was about to make some broth. Would you honor me?" I had already spread out my cloak on the grass for him.

"Ah, young fellow. You're a quick one! I came to ask you to join my mate and I. We've more than broth, and a stranger is most welcome. There's shelter to hold you, and news and a guest would be pleasant this night."

To refuse was to insult, and neither was wise. I bowed, thanked him, and gathered up my gear. He was very interested in the gastrophetes, the like of which he'd not seen. I explained the small catapult's use, but he would not try it, although he admired the workmanship. He did finger and examine the scroll I had taken out to read before I saw him. His interest was polite enough, but marked. I answered his question by assuring him that I could read and write--skills still rare in these mountains, it seemed!

"Perhaps I may read to you, tonight?"

"Indeed, young teacher. We'd like that! We've no neighbors, my mare and I, and none to tell tales around the fire. Men do not live up here. There are none of ...our... folk about."

I lifted an eyebrow at that. I had studied the various peoples of Hellas after I arrived. It's true that Phocis is away from the areas of the main herds. The Northern Centaurs ranged, these days, in Thessaly and Macedonia. In Acadia, the southern tribes lived in the more mountainous areas, such as this one, well enough, with good relations to the new League of cities there. Perhaps, after the deeds of Philip and his son, the two groups of horse-folk would mingle more freely as the Macedonian armies rebuilt the roads.

He led me on a hoof-worn path slightly downwards from the clearing, talking the while. He had truly been eager for an audience! I kept my ears open and my mouth shut, learning much. It wasn't hard to listen to him, in fact. He knew the mountain well, and had a cheerful way of describing what lay on either side of us as we moved. There was grazing, uncultivated barley, and rabbits enough to hunt and snare, roots that could be dug, and assorted wild nuts to collect. He and his mare were comfortable and safe, even in the mountain winter. There were references to his sons, but in a past tense I did not think it best to explore. He took my respectful attention as a matter of course, and I smiled again. His mare must be a quiet sort, as, in fact, was quite true.

He did not boast of his dwelling, for all his eagerness to talk. He might well have. The stable in front was well built, with a roof of shaped slates, raised upon pillars of piled stones. The sides were of woven wattle-and-daub, reeds and mud in two layers, with earth in between. Behind that lay a large cave, where the couple kept their stores and they slept in the colder weather. Nearby lay a meadow, and a portion of that now held a large and well-tended garden. I admired the system of ditches and channels dug to water the plants, and a thick mesh of branches woven to guard the crop. "My mare's." They had no need for further cultivation, he said, but browsed and gathered where they could.

"You have done very well!" I noted, remembering to spit three times to avert misfortune. It pays to learn the local superstitions if you want to be polite to the people you encounter. His eyes lighted at my care to guard the compliment, and he slapped my upper back, almost gratefully.

"You are kind, young fellow. It's pleasant to show someone what we've done, since we came here. You'll eat and rest well tonight. The best for a guest, as the priest says! We even manage to have wine, up here. My mare gathers sloe berries from the neighboring thickets. It's not what you'll be used to, but I hope that you'll like it. It helps our old bones, when the wind blows."

He shouted something--almost a whinny--as we passed their bubbling spring. To the stable's opening came his mate, and waved an arm in greeting. I saw more of her as we approached. Like him, she was old, but healthy. Two bright brown eyes were set in a smiling face framed by her still thick grayish-brown hair. The mare's resemblance to her stallion continued as my gaze moved lower. Past the homespun, her sleek lower body might well have been his, obvious differences aside.

I saw enough to wonder if they could be brother and sister, a thought I did not care to follow. In the mountains, with others not to be found, it was possible, but not to be mentioned or asked after.

The stallion had filled a large wooden tub at the spring, and would not let me help him carry it down to the stable where his mate waited for us patiently. She ignored my formal greeting and gave me a motherly hug. I found myself smiling, despite the strength of her arms. Both of them then insisted on the rites of full, old-fashioned hospitality. I had to wash off the dust of the road and drink wine before they would even ask my name, and it was only then that I learned theirs. The stallion was Graius, and he called his smiling mare Myrrhine.

They next set me off to one side, after spreading out my cloak on a bush to remove the fleas and sweat of the day. I had to smile again when they offered me cushions, stuffed with their own shed winter hair, which I declined with thanks. Instead, I used my bags to lean upon as I watched them bustle about preparing the evening meal. Curious... He was deft and sure as he handled the cauldron and knives while cooking. I watched his hands darting in and out among their carefully-carved tools and wooden bowls, his own work, he admitted. At times, however, he would stumble with no apparent cause, almost tripping over his legs.

While he worked, I watched his mare. Myrrhine busied herself bringing in ample wood for the fire, hefting large armloads with no apparent effort. On the other hand, she left the making and tending of the flames to her mate. I noted how she stayed well clear of the crockery as she deftly avoided his movements around their fire and stores, once smoothly shouldering Graius back to his hooves after a near stumble. Strange... They were a well-matched couple, I thought, but with oddly complimenting weaknesses. She stood respectfully by while the old stallion poured libation to Asclepius, the Healer. It puzzled me a bit, considering their striking mutual health, but was a wise precaution, surely.

The meal the two provided was quite the best of my journey: The rabbit had been braised and simmered in the sloe wine we drank together around a large flat stone in front of the stable. The stallion had found and broken large cakes of salt from an outcropping further up the mountain. Beneath the stewed meat lay a well-seasoned porridge of boiled barley, a wonderful combination, I thought. There were wild olives, and a jar of pickled eggs for savor. For sweetness, there were bits of honeycomb, which prompted the old stallion to joke about the mare's enduring speed in escaping the angry bees. She seemed to enjoy his chattering, but she did not join in. She watched him quietly, with a calm and very obvious love. Her part in the meal was to make sure that both of us had all we wanted, in centaur-sized portions, brought forth from large wicker baskets, handmade pots, and hanging bags. Quietly, but kindly, she gave neither of us a chance to do anything more than enjoy ourselves.

Graius found sand to clean the bowls we'd used, while Myrrhine brought more water, and then more wood. Both of them would not hear of my offering assistance. When the two of them finally stopped bustling, knelt down, and poured more wine, I brought out a bag of almonds I'd saved for my journey, which they did accept with thanks. We all drank more wine, and cracked the nuts as they finally asked me for the news, and what had brought me to their mountains.

"I am a student at the Lyceum--Aristotle's school, not the Academy. Athens is fine these days, and trade is beginning to get going again, with the North, at least. Since the King has left for the war in Persia, Aristotle has been called back to Stagira and Macedonia until mid-summer. In as much as the war's going very well, and times are calm throughout Greece, the masters suggested that we students see something of the country, and bring back different plants for us all to study during the winter."

"Plants?" said Graius. "My Myrrhine here knows much! You'll have to give him some of your herbs, heart's blood, before he moves on."

"Yes, husband." In her slow, and halting way, the old mare then told me a great deal indeed worth noting of the local vegetation. I couldn't quite place her accent. It wasn't quite the way she pronounced her words. Her speech was much like her stallion's--in drastically smaller quantity! I could not understand the pauses she took in speaking. It was almost like she was translating her thoughts into words before she spoke. She preferred to bring down samples of what she had stored and dried, rather than to tell me about each herb. She generously gave me many kinds of plants that I'd not seen before, and Bion, the botanist back at the Lyceum, would be very pleased. Both of them accepted my thanks, but continued to press me about myself and my wanderings.

"My native island--Rhodes--is mountainous, away from the sea, and I thought it would be pleasant to leave the flat lands for a while. It's been a long journey, but a very pleasant one. I've been north, through Thermopylae, visiting the old battlefields, and am on my way back to Attica through your land. I've been keeping notes of what I've found, and seen along the way. I like to know what I've done, and where I've been, and sometimes others are interested."

Graius was certainly listening, but something finally seemed to get the better of his polite, if unaccustomed silence.

"Son, do you write down strange things that you come across? Like one of those what-do-you-call-them, logographers?"

I smiled. "If you like stories like that, grandsire, I'll read you some Herodotus this evening. He's got a great many which I'm sure you'll both enjoy."

His eyes lighted, and he smiled and nodded, "I'd like that very much. But, I wonder..."

For a moment, I couldn't tell if he was thinking, remembering, or praying.

"Could you write down a strange story that I don't want forgotten? My own sons are gone or distant, and Myrrhine and I have no young of our own. It makes you feel full all the time, having a story you can't tell, a story as good as any you've heard. And Myrrhine, here, knows it as well as I do."

He pressed his mare's hand, and she reached over to embrace and hold him for a long moment. My own eyes glistened as I watched, thinking of my own old parents, and grandparents long gone...

"I'd very much like to hear it, if you'd like to tell it. I'm truly honored."

Myrrhine smiled and filled my wooden drinking bowl yet again as I leaned over to listen. Graius paused for a long thought, and a drink, before he began to pour it forth, and I started thanking Hermes for my good memory.

"You'll have to remember that road you came up. Now, about ten years ago, there was an old man on an old horse coming up that mountainside. He had his ax, and a length of cloth, going to girdle a few trees for the winter's fuel. You have to be careful when you do that, young sir. If you're careless, you kill too many trees. You kill too many trees, there's nothing to hold the mud to the mountainside. If there's nothing to hold the mud to the mountainside, you get a landslide, and nothing grows after."

"Well, I've always been careful, but not everybody is, and there's more. You get tired, up here, and sometimes your strength goes, when you're old, before you know it's gone. The horse herself was getting on, gentle as she was, and the two of them, I think, did too much that day. You ought to know when to stop, as the mouse-killer says."

I wondered if Aristotle would like me telling everyone that he got his "Golden Mean" from some local Phocian legend about Apollo, as relayed by an old centaur. No, he wouldn't like that. Not at all.

"So, after working himself too much, and keeping the poor horse standing, waiting on him, he had several trees girdled and some good wood to take down the mountain and sell to the local woodcarver. You wouldn't know, I don't think, but there's a human village on the other side of this ridge, down in the valley. You'll pass through it, if you keep to this way. Not bad folk, or so they weren't.

"Now, as the old, and the event proved it, 'fool' found out, both of them had no business going down a steep trail in bad light. Worse yet, he'd tied the wood across the mare's rump, and you know that makes balancing harder. She didn't mind carrying him, and the wood, but it was just more foolishness on his part.

The centauress reached over and pressed the stallion's hand.

"Well, it was! He could have gotten them both killed! Nearly did, in fact. Too cursed nearly did...

"Cloud came over the sun, they were in a dark area, and it was getting late. Both of them missed a turn on the trail. He could feel her scrabbling with her hooves, trying to keep from falling. No good. It had rained a few nights before. She couldn't get her balance, and then the ground gave way beneath them. As I said, you have to watch the trees you kill, and some fool--not that one--hadn't done that. They both fell straight down the side of the mountain.

"Must have been three, four, stadia--into a little glen you can't get into any other way. So much pain... He woke up about five hours later, trapped between his mare and a tree. It was the middle of the night. Big moon over his head, showing him what a wreck he'd made of himself and the poor horse.

"He'd smashed both his hips, legs, and it felt like he'd rammed a couple of broken ribs into his lungs. He couldn't tell if it was his blood or her blood in his mouth. The... the damned idiot! hadn't stowed the ax properly. The ill-omened thing had gotten jammed right into the mare's jaw. Gods... It had nearly severed it from her poor gentle head... She couldn't hardly breathe for the blood, and, thanks to him, the two of them were going to die in pain, all alone, with no one to help them, or know they'd gone."

He stared at the fire a long moment.

"Least, that's how it looked. Now, a learned young sir like yourself would know that the mouse-killer--Apollo--had one son of whom he was particularly fond. That was Asclepius, the doctor, the fellow who could raise the dead..."

I added, helpfully, "Hippolytus, killed in the chariot wreck by his father's curse. That is why Zeus killed Apollo's son, to keep the world from being overrun with the resurrected. But he kept healing, even after his own death... There's a large shrine to him in Epidaurus."

Graius looked up, his eyes shining in the firelight.

"That'd be him. His father's shrine's down at Delphi, you know, where you said you were going. What I saw was a large, gray snake--except that snakes don't glow, don't crawl over you, and don't tell you not to move. Even the mare didn't shy at it, or try to..."

"The snake--god--Asclepius--looked at the two of them, dying there.

"You are both gravely injured," it hissed. "I will remove your pain. It is the duty of the physician to alleviate suffering."

"The old man and the mare felt their agony fade away. Blessed death, it looked like, fading quietly into the dark... But the snake had laid one of these herbs here across both their wounds. Chiron's plant--Centaury... It grows wild around in these parts, as Myrrhine told you.

"For awhile, neither of them could see the snake, but they could feel it moving over them, around them... Through them? It doesn't do to try and figure out how the gods carry out what they've intended. The pain was gone.

That was what mattered, and all either of them could think about, as they started to feel and think things that neither of them had ever felt, thought, before.

"Then it appeared before them, again, floating in the moonlight.

"I could not heal the two of you separately. Each of you had lost something I could not mend before you would die from other causes. I have taken you both and used each of you to heal the other. You are whole--but you are not as you were. If I have harmed where I sought to help, I am sorry."

"In the morning, the snake was gone... And Myrrhine and I found our way out of the glen."

This time, he reached over and embraced his mate for a long moment.

"Blessed be the healing god," I muttered. There had been miraculous cures in the Ascleipia, over the years, including the complex at Epidaurus. The temples were full of offerings. The educated tended to dismiss them as delusions of illness, delusions dispelled by other delusions. Perhaps disbelief is not always the way to wisdom. Graius could not be mad or lying. I had already been startled by his lower half's resemblance to Myrrhine's. Her lower body--his upper body, copied, shared and fitted to each by the healing god.

He looked up and smiled at me, while she put her mouth against his ear and whispered something. Then he looked back again and smiled.

"We've been very happy together, once we got used to what the god had made of us both. She had to teach me how to walk again--like I was her foal! The added strength, and weight... Wonderful, but it's all so different from what I was born with. So much you can do, that you couldn't, things you can't do that you could, not that I regret that. I taught her Greek, although she doesn't use it much. She didn't before, after all! She's better with the hooves than I am. I'm better with the hands. Just as we did that day on the mountainside, we've helped each other get by.

"There were problems, of course... I had sons, by the wife I'd had down in the village. She'd died, gently, thank the gods, years before. My eldest son had been killed fighting for Onomarchus in the Sacred War, during the troubles. The middle one went to the fighting in Persia--I think he's in the cavalry."

That brought smiles from both of them.

"I imagine the youngest took my house and farm, down there. Myrrhine and I did go down the mountainside, once. She wanted to see her last foal, and there were some tools I had that we needed. There was no point in telling my boy what had happened to us. There's no going back after a change like ours.

"Myrrhine, here, and I are more than mates. We've shared our bodies since we changed, but we've shared something besides no two others have, I think. Might yet have children of our own, some day! We were both past that, before, but, we've learned to expect miracles... No one bothers us up here, and we've been so very happy. Don't usually speak to strangers, but when another centaur comes by... You understand how we felt..."

I smiled, and exchanged breath with them both. For a while, we just lay close to each other, our bodies touching, in the fashion of a herd. At length, I spoke again.

"I am very honored. It is a beautiful story, and I hope to share it, if you will permit me that. I will certainly see to it that it is remembered! Now, let me tell you something, which I hope will benefit you in return?"

"I had a chance to talk with others of our folk, and they told me a great deal. To the North, near the Strymon, the Northern Herd has build the 'Teichos Geronton'--the fortress of the aged, they call it. If life up here ever becomes too hard for you, remember it. The very old and the very young live there, while the adults range and gather food to store within the walls, for the winter. There are the young to teach, and play with, hippiatrici, and food, and comfort. It is a very pleasant place, I hear.

The kings of Macedonia, Epirus, and the Thessalians have sworn to protect it, for the trade profits all. The healing god has taken an interest in you. He will guide your way, if you should wish to go there."

I spent three more days with the old couple, getting my rear hooves and tail better groomed than they had been in a long time. The three of us were able to add considerably to the strength of the stable's walls with the heavier logs I could drag down from the surrounding groves, Graius chopping (with a different ax), and Myrrhine roping them and me to a skid. In the evenings, I worked side by side with Myrrhine, learning to forage for berries and clearing and bundling brush from their trails. It was a source of satisfaction to apply what I have learned in the Lyceum in improving the draft of their chimney. Each night, as I promised, I read a great deal of Herodotus to them by the light of their fire. Rhodian that I am, I taught them both the use of the sling, to help them with the rabbits, or at need.

I have delivered Myrrhine's herbs and notes to Bion, at the Lyceum, and have written this account for Bion to insert into Chiron's collection of writings. I am doubtful if Centaury might be as healing as it was for these two, without the direct ministration of the healing god.

The End



Aladdin & Abu © Disney

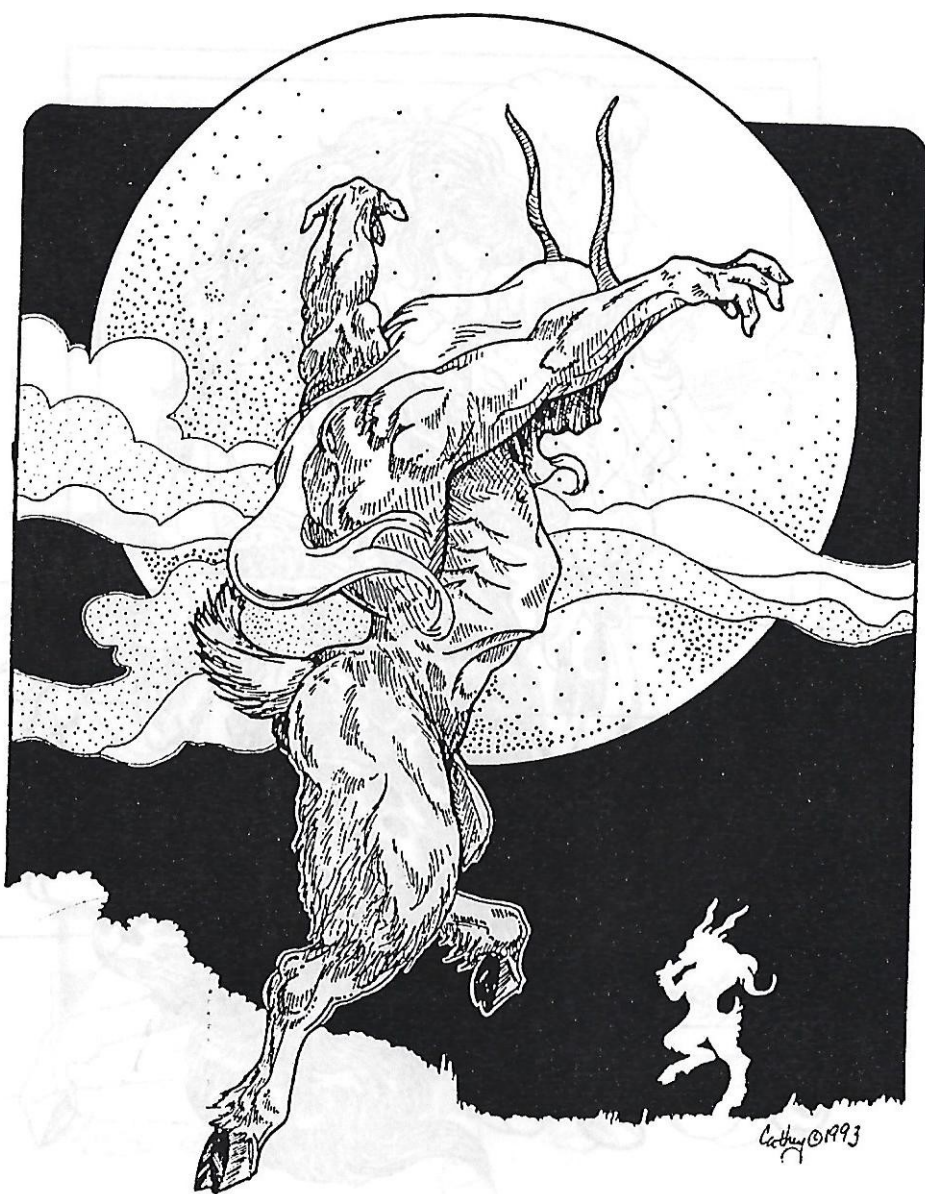
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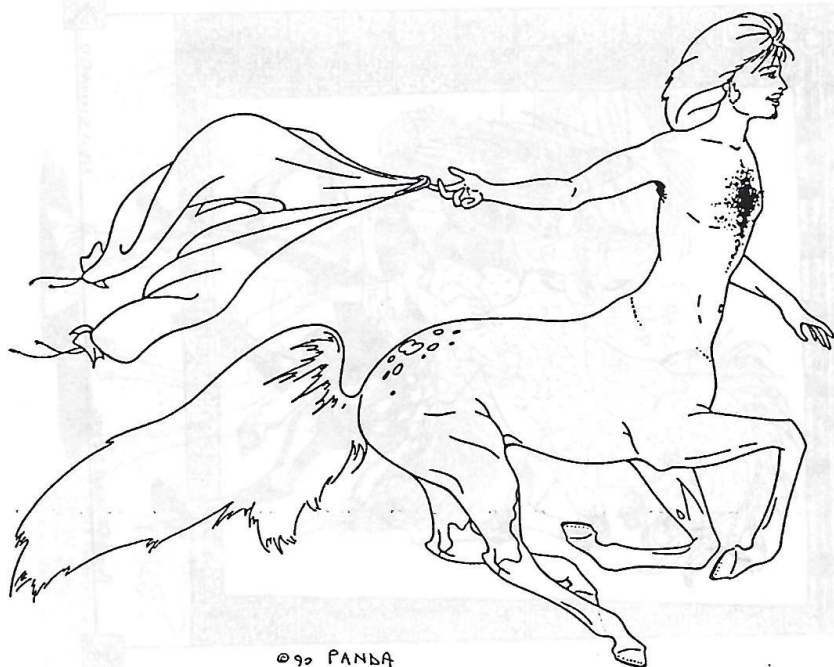


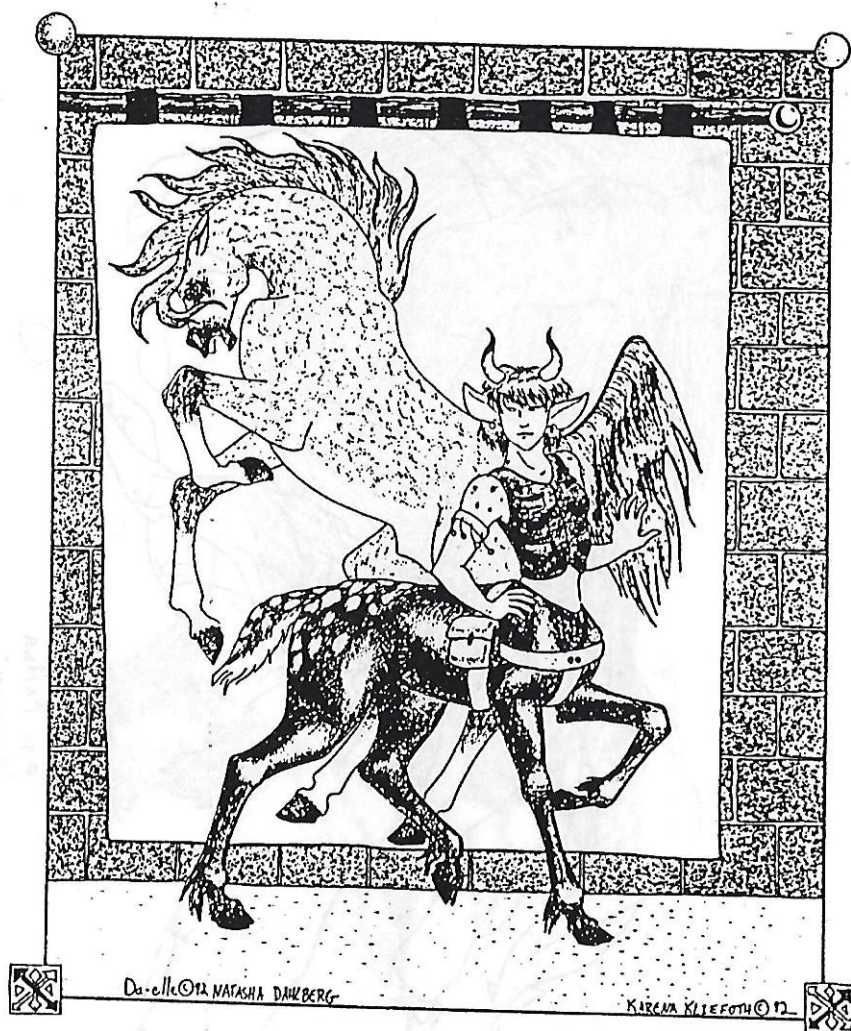
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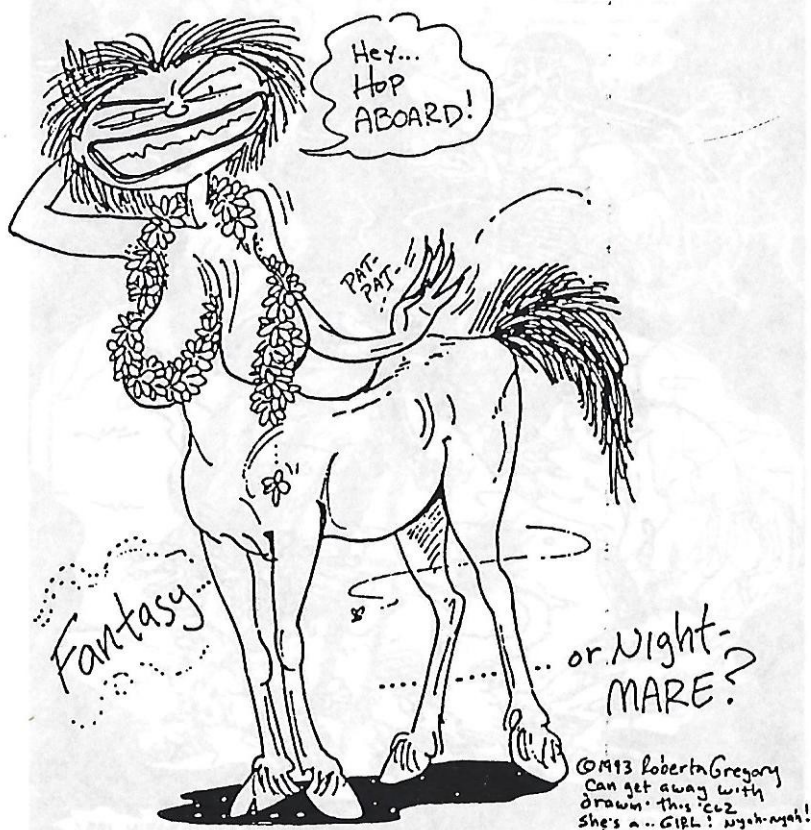


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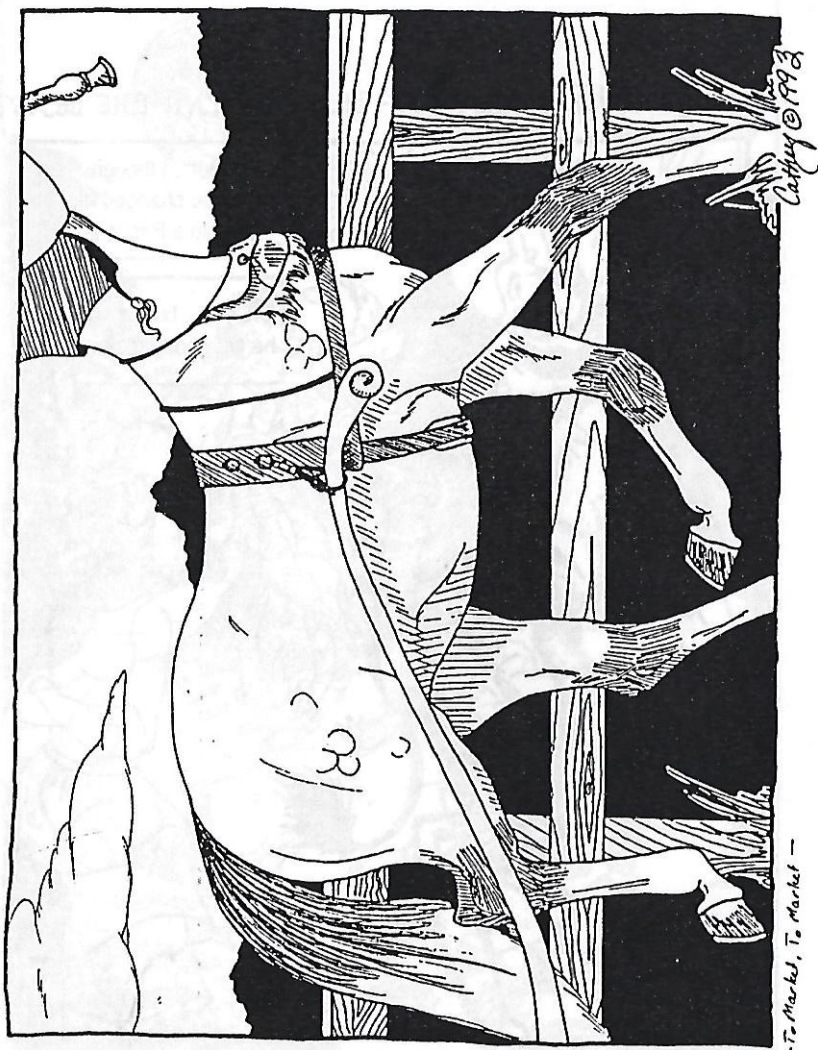


'Koda's Summoning' - by Anna-Karin Larsson

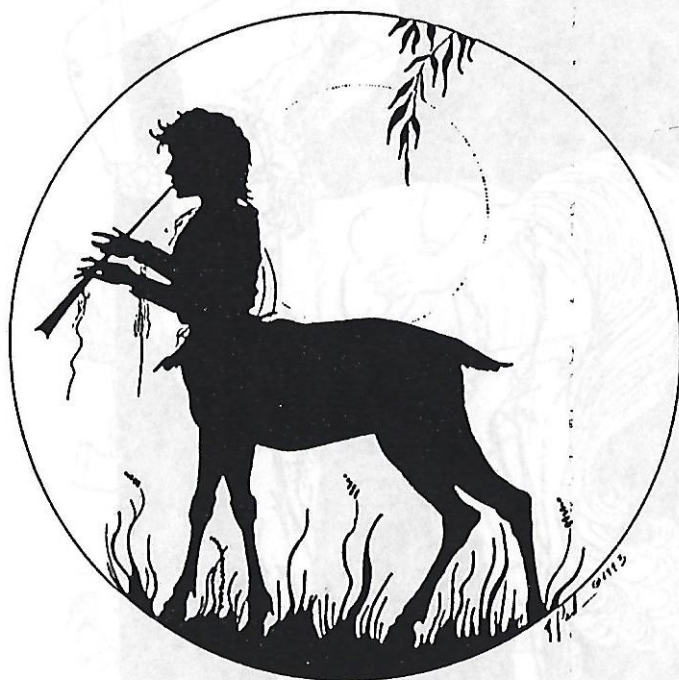
IT'S SEQUEL TIME FOR - BEAUTY AND THE BEAST



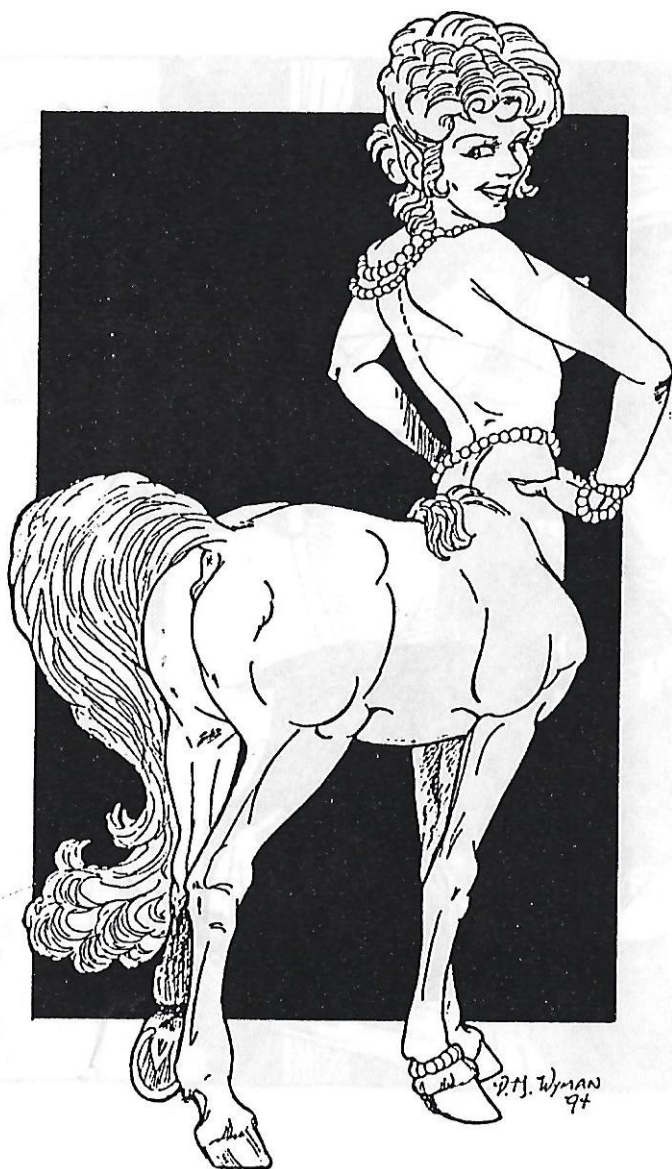
'He Got Better' - by Simon Barber



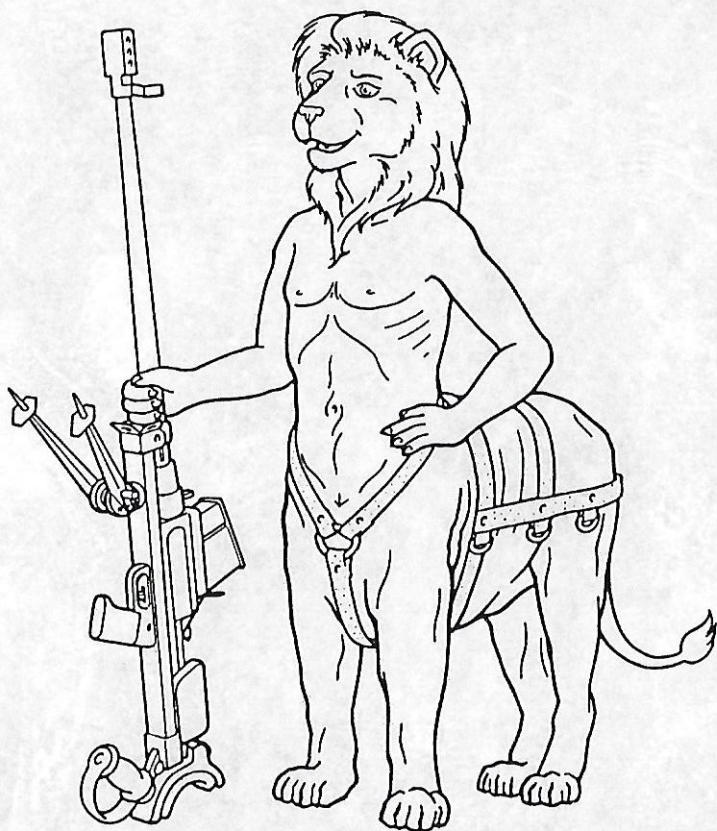
'To Market, To Market' - by Cathey Henley Osborne



'Kid's Song' - by Michelle Parker



'Pin-Up' - by Vickie Wyman

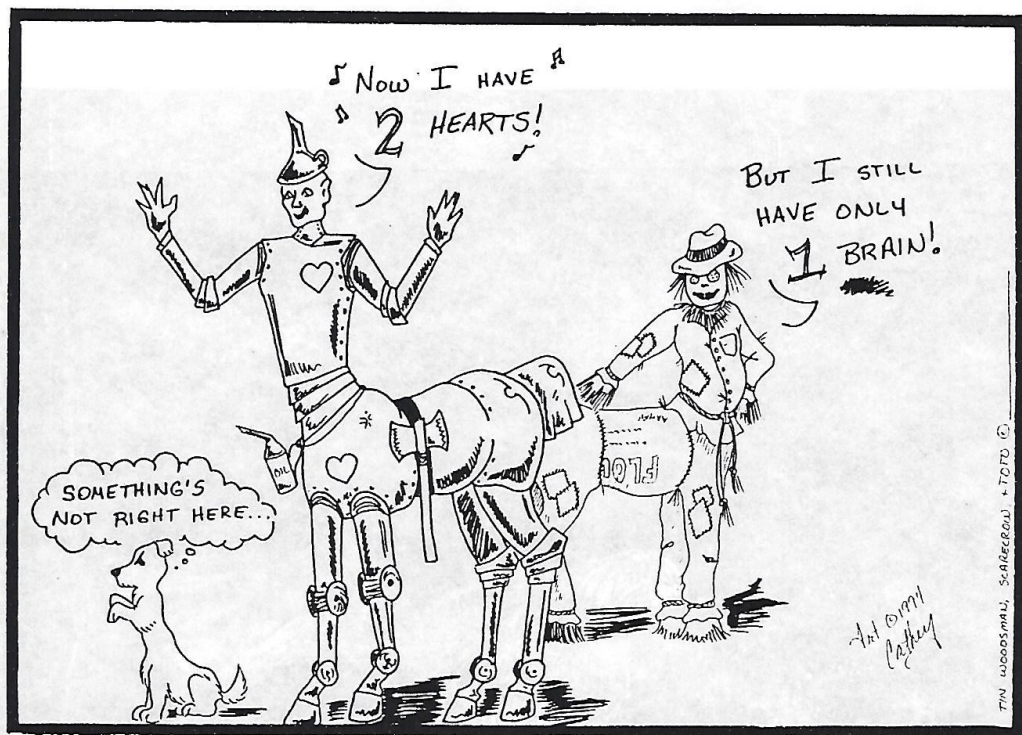


Going Hunting
With The Boys

little john ©95

'Going Hunting' - by John W. Tatman





TIN WOODS/MIL. SARGENT + TODD ©

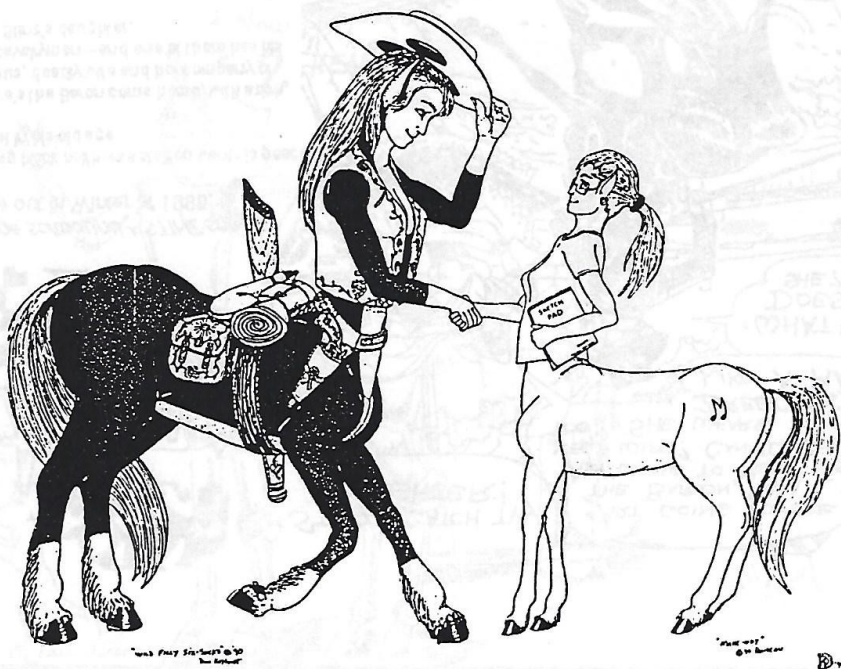
"A STRANGER TO OUR KIND"

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'When Two Characters Meet' - by Don Kephart

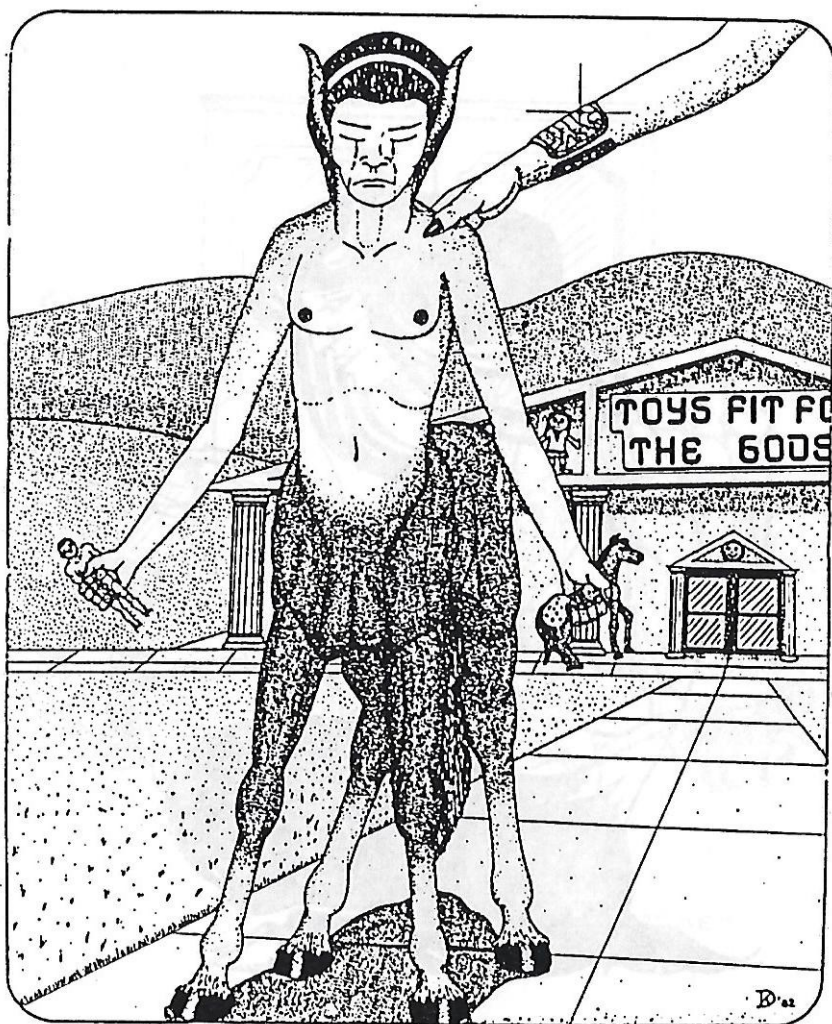


'Elk Spirit' - by Cathey Henley Osborne

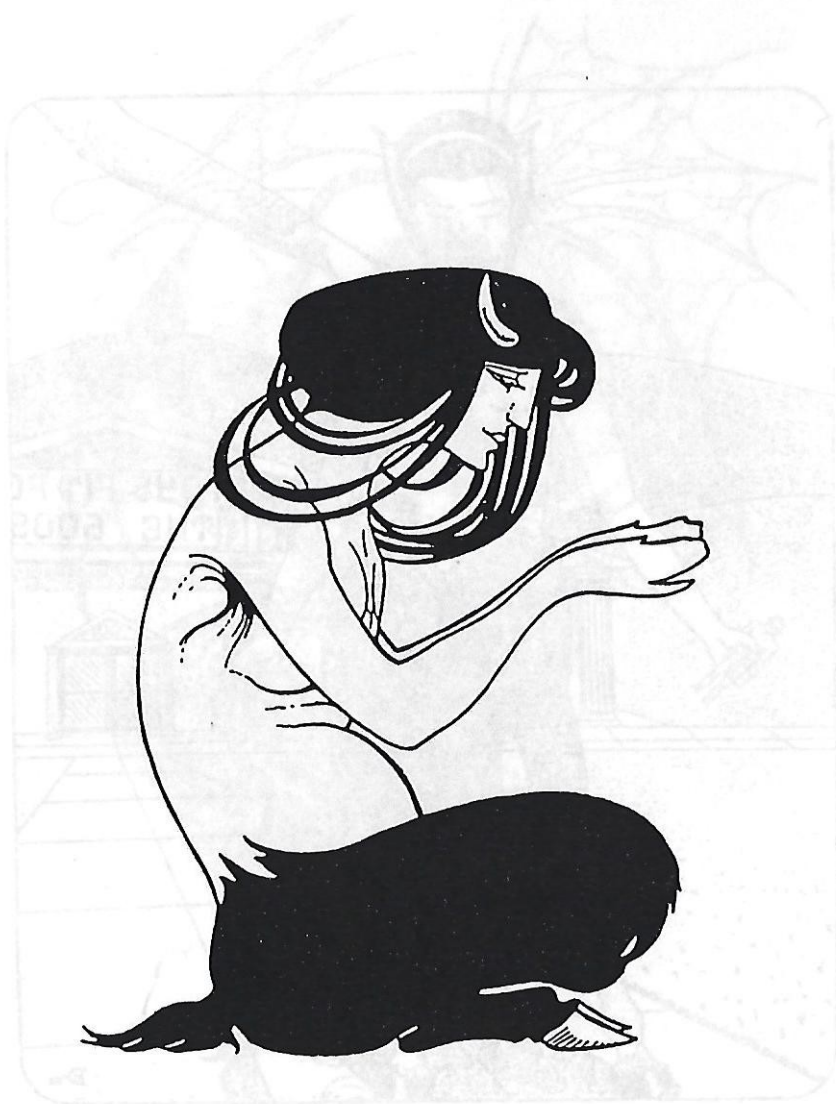




'Drow Centauress with Whip' - by Shane A.



'Son - We're the Best of Both Worlds' - by Don Kephart



'Seated Satyr After Beardsley' - by Cathey Henley Osborne



'Naptime' - by Cathay Henley Osborne
Is the child centaur or human?



'Untitled' - by Michelle Parker

HOOFPRINTS

If you discover a book, TV show, movie, Web Site, or anything else that has centaurs, minotaurs, or satyrs in it, let Hoofprints know!

Television

Hercules - The New Adventures (*Some great centaur costumes/effects*)

Books/Publications

Piers Anthony's Xanth and Apprentice Adept series (*DUH!*)

Well World Series - Jack L. Chalker (*Centaurs as main characters*)

The Spirit Wood - by Robert Masetto (*A man discovers his inner satyr*)

Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor (comic) Vol 2, #1 (*A centaur story with a twist*)

The Centaur in the Garden - by Moacyr Sliar (translation by Available Press - 1984)
(*This is a really unusual book about a Brazilian born as a centaur to human parents, and reared as a Jew. Highly recommended, if you can find it!!*)

Mailbox Books - P.O. Box 1278 - Roslyn, PA 19001 (*Back issues of CGN*)

Movies

Nothing new - anything by Ray Harryhausen from the 1960s.

Web Sites

Donna Barr's Web Site - dbarr@linknet.kitsap.lib.wa.us

Other Stuff

Hercules Action Figures - A centaur figure has been sited at toy stores!



©BB PANDA
MILNE

'A Win-Taur of Very Little Brain' - by Panda

The Joke

by Ann Cathey

She awoke with a long, tingly stretch and smiled. Her brother Cliffwalker might live in the woods, but he certainly did so comfortably. Inhaling deeply to avoid a yawn, she smelled the rich fragrance of the evergreen boughs comprising her mattress. Maybe comfortably wasn't the word, but it was close.

Lazily, she stretched some more and contemplated fixing breakfast. She had plenty of supplies in her pack. What she didn't have, her woods-wise or her magic could easily improvise.

Try as she might, though, she could neither roll over nor balance properly to sit up. A deep frown lined her face as the brightness of dawn took a nasty blow. Her hips had finally gotten too wide, she thought snidely to herself. Then again...

Dawnwind stretched her legs once more, experimentally. This time she could feel the muscles down her back going somewhere they hadn't previously; she couldn't feel her toes. Twisting her torso up and around as best she could to look, she found out why.

There was half a horse on her bed. More precisely, her bottom half.

Scrambling frantically with her horribly heavy feet, she managed to roll her equine parts over until her humanoid torso was upright. With another heave, she was standing, heedless of the gaping holes being torn through her camp blanket. She bobbed unsteadily for a moment while adjusting to her new legs. She settled for bracing them like fence posts.

Behind her, Cliffwalker snickered.

Dawnwind's upper half whirled around at the sound while firmly keeping her legs in place. Falling down as a human was bad enough; in this body it would be positively painful! Her long black tail twitched involuntarily across the ground, snagging a few hairs on the pine boughs. She glanced murderously at her brother. He stood well out of reach, his wolf sitting at his feet.

"What have you done?!" she demanded, planting delicate fists on her hips.

He spread his hands placatingly and smiled what she privately thought of as his disarming best. "You know I can't resist a good joke," he said gently, keeping well out of reach.

"All right. You've had your fun. You're laughing and I'm furious! Now, change me back!"

"I can't"

"What?" She wasn't quite sure she'd heard him correctly.

"The spell is non-reversible, with a short life-span. You'll have to wait until it wears off." Infuriatingly, he was still smiling at her.

"And until then?"

"You'll just have to learn to walk on all fours, I guess. If you need some help, I'm sure Icekill could give you some pointers."

The huge white wolf looked up at his name. Cliffwalker's familiar was sure to have been in on this prank from the beginning. His great red tongue lolled suggestively over his white lips.

"I could always do an animal speak for you," Cliffwalker suggested sweetly.

"I can do that myself, thank you," she snarled back.

With grim determination, Dawnwind tried not to think about her feet. Being laughed at by her brother was bad enough, but the silent wolfish glee was making it worse. Where a polymorph went, instinct invariably followed. She was nonetheless surprised and pleased when her first few steps took her neatly out of the remains of her bed without sending her sprawling.

"Mother put you up to this, didn't she? Dawnwind asked suddenly. "She didn't want me interfering with her world-hunting again, so she conned you into keeping me occupied and this is what you came up with, eh?"

"Well..."

"I'll get her back later. You too, if you don't get real nice, real quick."

Grimly amused, she watched her last remark register on Cliffwalker. His features clouded, rained uneasiness, then broke into a sunny smile. He knew from experience how mean she could get. He wouldn't want a refresher course, she was sure.

"You, too, fuzz-face."

Icekill ducked behind Cliffwalker's robes, his icy eyes trying to do an imitation of a sad puppy.

With a flourish of his white hair and gray robes, Cliffwalker bowed to her. She noted the twinkle of mischief in his brilliant blue eyes as he opened his mouth and laid it on like honey.

"Oh, most beauteous of black-skinned wonders, let this pale, unworthy sibling atone for his sins. Where shall I begin, beloved sister?"

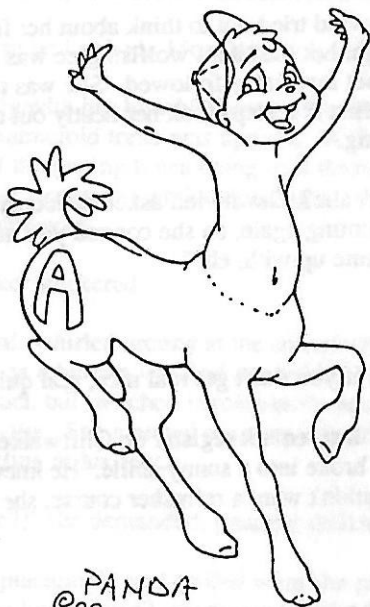
Dawnwind sniffed and looked around the glade. The thought of Cliffwalker willingly submitting himself to slavery was rather pleasant. Walking lessons might be a good start, and there was a lot of grooming to be done to get the pine needles out of her hair and tail. Maybe even a full bath. Then she'd have to figure out a way to hold her lap harp, and...

Her stomachs rumbled. Both of them.

"OK, unworthy sibling," she said, grinning. "I'm game. Let's start with breakfast and see if you can feed what you can conjure."

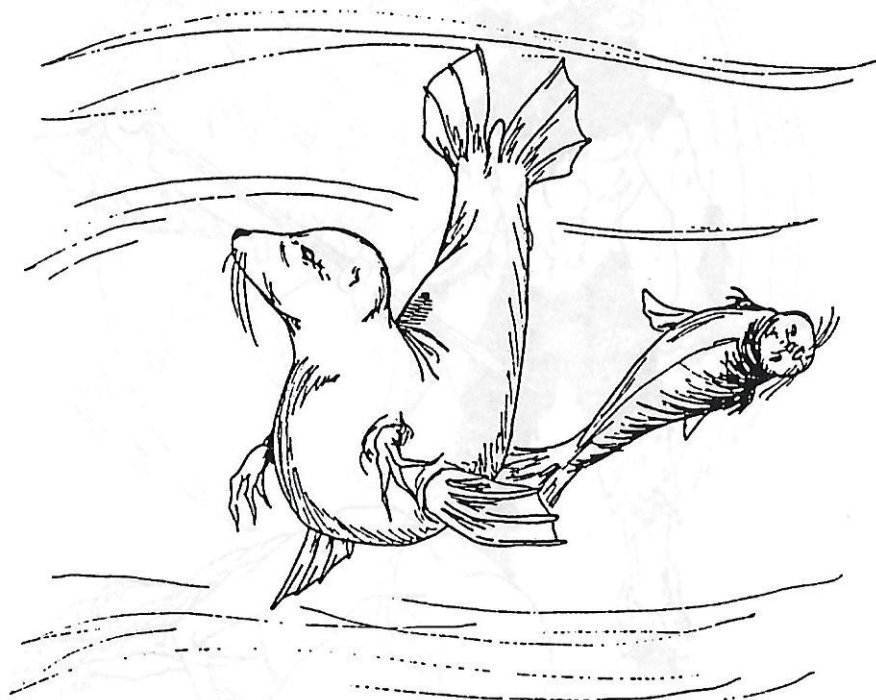
Maybe the day wouldn't turn out so bad after all.

The End



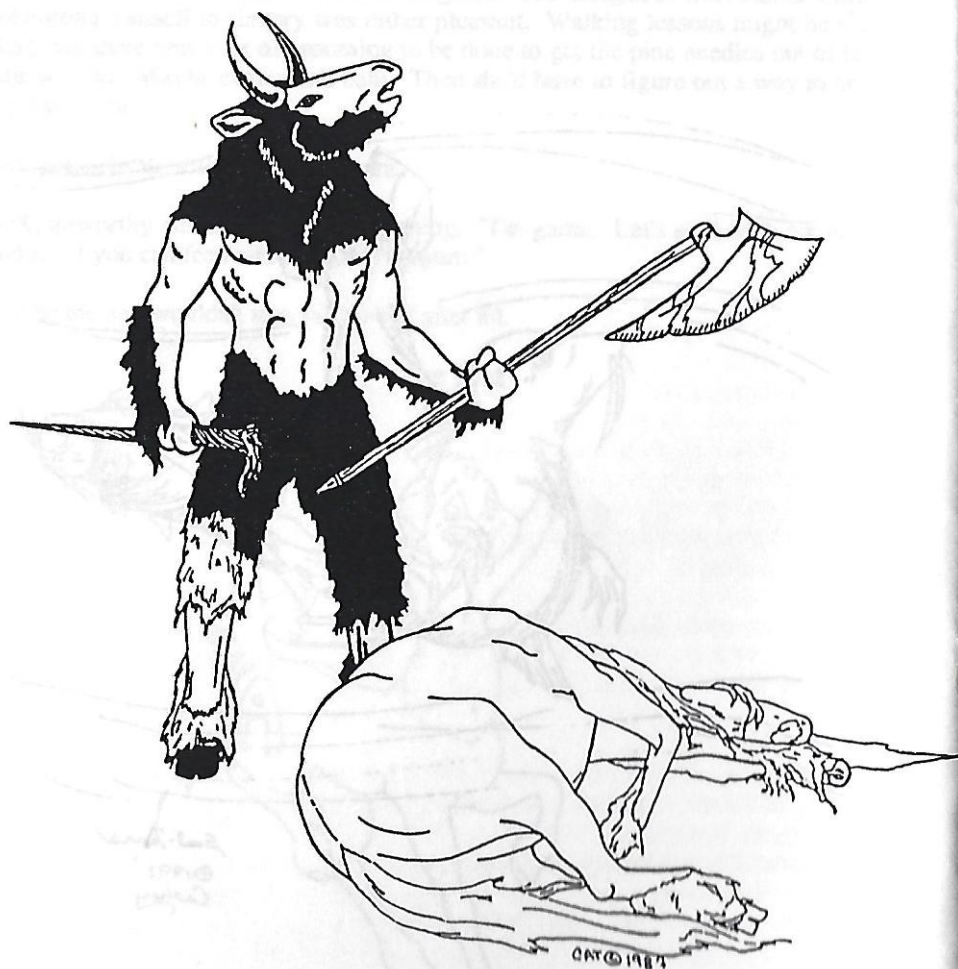
ALVIN ©89 EAGDASAKIAN PRODUCTIONS

'Alvin' - by Panda



Seal-Taur
©1991
Cathey

'Seal-Taurs' - by Cathey Henley Osborne



'Divorce Decree' - by Cathey Henley Osborne



'Cloud Painting' - by Dione Raschka



Last issue's 'The Transfer' writing contest generated some interesting entries. After careful deliberation and weighing of the writers' talents, adherence to the subject, and size of bribes, the lucky winner of Donna Barr's original draft artwork is:

The Transfer

by Aaron Reed

Andre cursed the fresh snowfall as he stumbled over another root. The white covering which hid uneven footing also provided his trackers with an easy trail to follow. Not that he could evade them much longer, anyway. Icy wind cut through his jacket as if it wasn't there, and his hair-end was stiff with frozen sweat. Unless he found shelter soon, the weather would kill the last of his Army's centaurs before the enemy even caught him.

How foolish he and the others had been. Young stallions, eager for adventure. None of their kind had left the valley in centuries, but the human recruiter's sales pitch had won out over the vague warnings of old legends. Once they had gotten over the strangeness of the outside world, the centaurs had earned respect for their strength and endurance. There had been talk of keeping them together in a special cavalry outfit, but their value as messengers was prized over fighting ability and the group had been dispersed among the infantry. And into the war.

He shivered, and not just from the cold. The first of his fellows to fall in battle had been hacked to pieces by the enemy. They were an ignorant, superstitious lot who saw centaurs as demons and monsters. Yet it wasn't a violent death that he feared as much as the unknown fate of the others. All ten remaining centaurs had vanished without trace in recent attacks.

At first, there had been rumors they had panicked and deserted under fire. After all, who could make a one-ton soldier go anywhere he didn't want to go? The answer was brought back by a human survivor of an attack which took Andre's best friend, Renard. Better known as 'Corporal Boots' because of his black legs, the centaur's pale brown hair-half was criss-crossed with white scars from previous battles. According to the soldier, Renard had been singled out from the rest of the unit by a group of men on horseback. He had been last seen meekly following the mounted soldiers at the end of a rope.

Andre's bitter contemplation was interrupted by faint shouts from the right. The enemy was closing in. He broke into a gallop, heedless of the rough ground. What did a broken leg matter if he was caught? Up ahead, he could see a break in the forest, with open land beyond. Once he reached that, he would be safe. No one could catch him, even on horseback.

The shouts were closer now, but they were too late. With a surge of relief, Andre burst out of the woods. And went sprawling heavily on the ground as his legs collapsed from under him. Bewildered, he rolled back up to his hooves, backing up instinctively as he looked for the hole or branch which had brought him down. He could see movement on the sides, and bolted for the clearing again. Only to find himself stopped by some unseen force.

Andre looked around frantically. One of the enemy horsemen was approaching quickly, with infantry visible through the trees. Why couldn't he leave the forest? Running along the edge, he looked for some sign of nets or wires that might be holding him back. The only thing he could see out of the ordinary were small, crude dolls made of sticks and bits of cloth, hanging from some of the trees.

Some silly superstition of the enemy, no doubt. Yet even as he scoffed, he realized that something was stopping him from leaving the forest. The enemy soldiers were close enough to see clearly now. Andre tried twice more to run, and finally spun to face them with his pistol drawn. They didn't know it was empty, and if he had to die, he'd go out charging into battle.

He sprang towards the closest group with a shout of defiance, only to go sprawling again. This time, however, the cause was obvious. His left foreleg had been lassoed and pulled out from under him by a man hiding among the trees. And when he attempted to break loose, he discovered that he couldn't move at all.

The mounted soldier and the one who had roped him approached cautiously. Andre saw that the man on foot was carrying a saddle, and surge of hatred broke through his fear. Did they think he would serve them as a mount? He would die first.

Hands poked and prodded his hair half, and his jacket was ripped open and pulled off. Already half-frozen, Andre felt numbness spread over his chest and arms as the winter wind sucked out the last of his life. And then he stood up.

Not by choice. A chill of fear even colder than the air rushed through him. He was standing erect, arms hanging at his sides, unable to do more than blink his eyes. The man who had roped him looked up at Andre's face with a broad grin. Unlike most of the enemy soldiers, he had long, wild hair and a gold earring. One of the mountain Gypsies, perhaps.

"You are the last." Andre was surprised that the man spoke his language, but was unable to respond. "The last of the Demon-possessed monsters who fight for our enemies. Your race is very old, centaur, but my people know magics which are even older." He gestured towards one of the dolls. "Only true humans and animals can pass these wards. And my rope binds your body to my will." He smiled again, revealing dirty, crooked teeth. "It is time to remove your Demon, and transfer you to our service."

The man reached up and draped a leather harness over Andre's head, and then proceeded to saddle him. The straps over his head were decorated with feathers, bits of metal, and strange markings, obviously part of some ceremony. As the saddle was cinched down, the man began to chant loudly in an unfamiliar language.

It was ridiculous. Andre's mind rebelled against the idea of such foolish superstition. Magic was impossible. Yet something had stopped him at the edge of the woods. And if the rope tied to his foreleg was not supernatural, why couldn't he move? Fear began to rise again. What did this man mean by transferring him to their service? Did he have a way of brainwashing the centaur to fight his own people?

Unable to follow the chanting man with his eyes, Andre focused on the mounted soldier. Another wild-haired Gypsy, this one watched the ceremony with keen interest. Andre felt strange, vision blurring slightly as his head seemed to drop lower. Instead of looking down at the mounted soldier, he actually had to roll his eyes slightly upward. From the new angle, he also got a better look at the horse. Its pale brown coat was criss-crossed with white scars, and it stood on black legs

Recognition brought a flash of renewed terror. Yet even as Renard's name came to mind, the word suddenly lost meaning. Andre blinked, trying to focus past the swelling mass of his face. Confusion and fear slowly drained away, carrying the remnants of his memories. The horse shook its head, and then thrust its muzzle into the snow in search of buried grass. The Transfer was complete.

The End



'Lovers in Silhouette' - by Cathey Henley Osborne

Tonight O

(Centaur Reprise)

by Shira Aislinn Alexander

Tonight O, my love,
we shall pace the silver sands
beneath the racing moon.

Tonight O, my love,
the sea's cry shall be our own
and the stars less luminous than we.

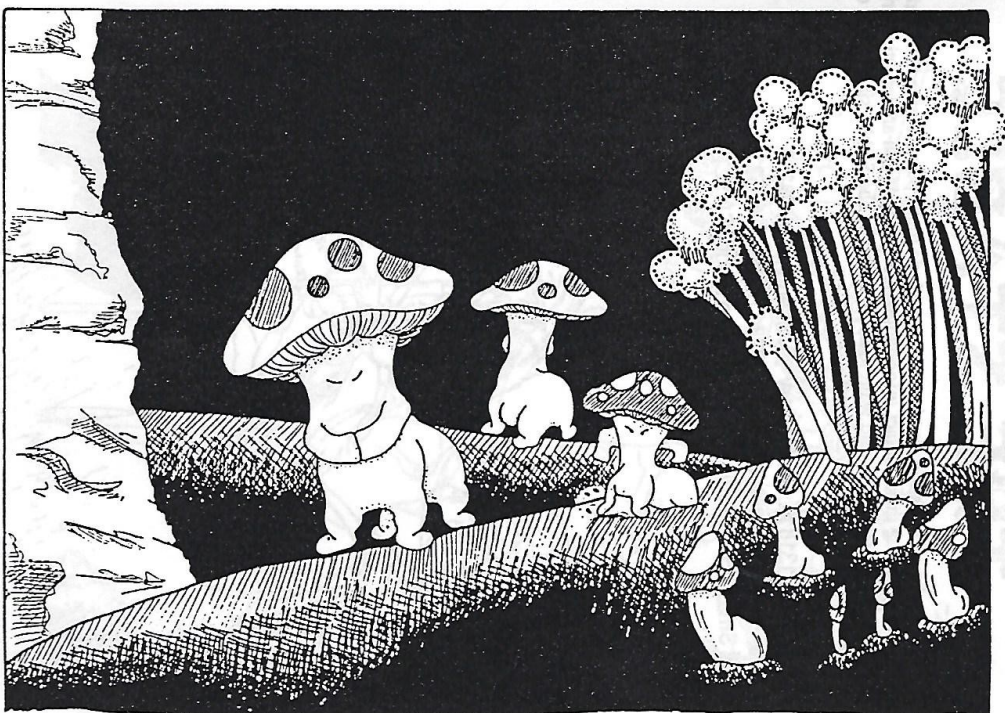
Tonight O, my love,
we shall dance beneath the paling sky
as the surf reaches to caress our flanks.

Tonight O, my love,
the earth shall spin beneath your hooves
as I bury my face in your midnight mane.

'When We Ain't Fightin' - by Nick McRae



'The Ripening Patch' - by Calhey Henley Osbome



THE STABLE

Sorry about the short listing, but I will only include those persons who have indicated an interest in having their contact information published. If you are an artist/writer who does commission work and want to be included in The Stable, simply call or drop me a note (E-mail or U.S. Snail).

Donna Barr - 1318 N. Montgomery - Bremerton, WA 98312

Panda - 6161 E. Northwest Hwy. #2278 - Dallas, TX 75231

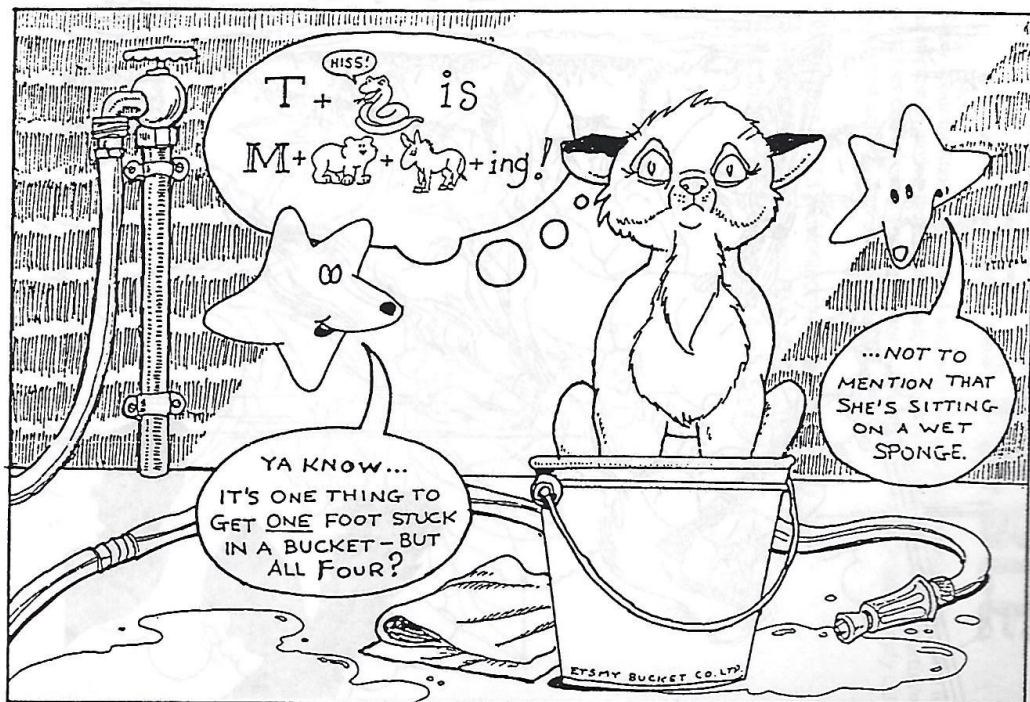
Terrie Smith - 3675 Bellingham Ave. - San Diego, CA 92104-4410



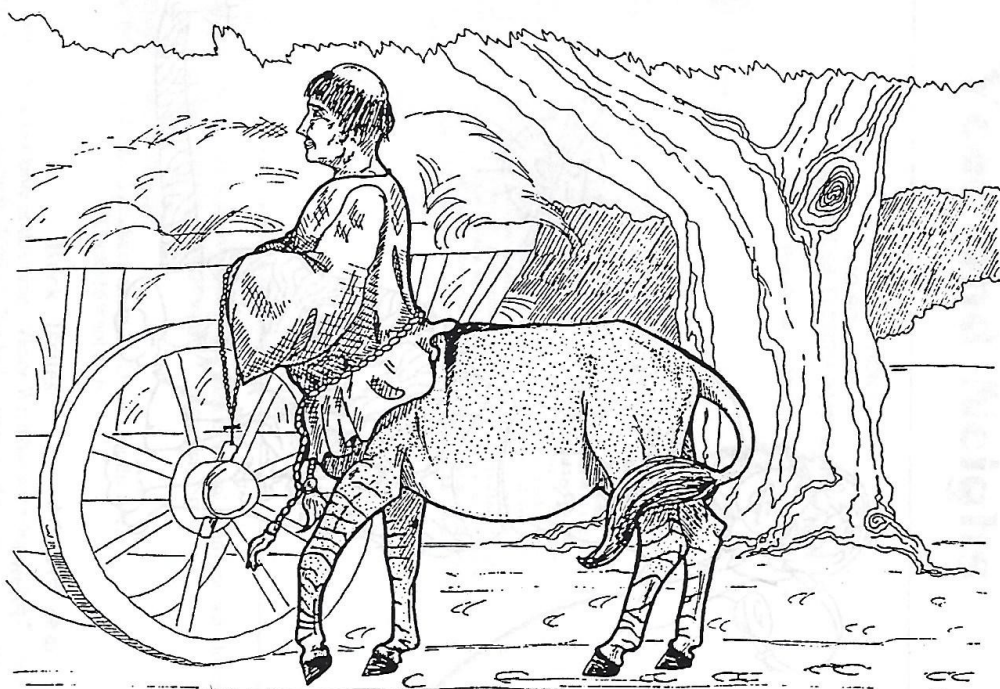
'Bumble-Dragon' - by Dione Raschka



'Cyber-Centaur' - by D. Schiller



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Cathey © 1993



© 90 PANDA
"PASHA"

"Pasha" - by Panda

Yeas and Neighs

PIERS ANTHONY
PO BOX 2289
INVERNESS, FLORIDA 34451-2289

Marsh 19, 1996

BOB STEIN
CENTAURS GATHERUM
7500 PENNINGTON ROAD
NORFOLK VA 23505-3641

Dear Bob,

I'm glad to see that CENTAURS GATHERUM didn't fold. I'll recommend it to readers of mine who I think will be interested.

"The anatomy of a Centaur" tackles problems that have bothered me somewhat. I have concluded that the rules of magic have little or nothing to do with the rules of science, and the centaur is a magical creature, so can eat a human type meal and support a horse sized body. The stretch becomes worse with the winged centaurs, who lack proper keels to anchor their flight muscles; without magic they'd be lost. The social aspects are another arena; my fantasy centaurs are completely open about natural functions, but somewhat prudish about direct references to magic. Thus my fillies wear no halters, but are loath to acknowledge any magic talents. Since they obviously do have magic, the pretense becomes strained--just as it does with human folk who pretend to have no natural functions.

May you gallop on.



(OK, so I'm making a big deal out of this. The man is an idol to anyone who loves fantasy and puns, not necessarily in that order. So there!)

RE: fiction by Lucia K.B. Hall

Wonderful! Keep going! Let's have another! Thanks for the ride.

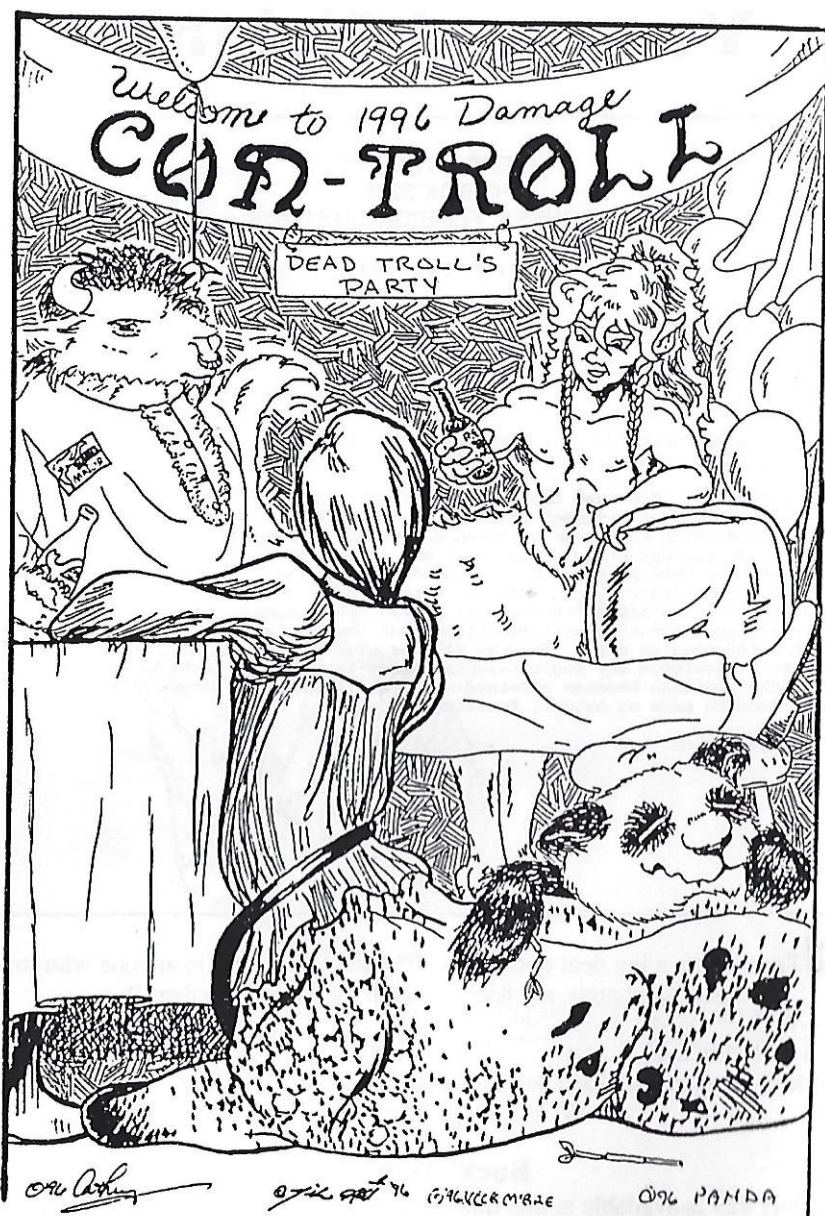
WCook616@aol.com

Back Issues

Sorry - Only #29 is available at this time. Victor Wren has not released back issues (#1-28) to me for reproduction. Mailbox Books has some of the later issues in stock.

Subscriptions

Not available at this time - I am not quite to the point where I can handle the accounting required. Please bear with me on this - I'm working on the problem!



'The Con-Troll Jam' - "This piece is a jammed-together work of Panda, Cathey Henley Osborne, Nick McRae, and Mike Garcia at the 1996 Con-Troll Dead Troll Party. It was done expressly for the Gatherum"